

HARROW ADMISSIONS FORUM

3 MARCH 2008

Chairman:	(Vacancy)
Councillors:	* Dinesh Solanki * Bill Stephenson (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)
Community School Representatives:	<u>Governor</u> <u>Primary</u> <u>Secondary</u> (Vacancy) * Sue Jones * Janice Howkins
Jewish School Representative:	* Mrs D Palman
Roman Catholic School Representative:	* Mike Murphy
Church of England School Representative:	Mrs S Hinton
Church of England Diocese Representative:	* Rev Paul Reece
Catholic Schools Diocese Representative:	* Mr Billiet
Primary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	† Mrs D Speel
Secondary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	Mr R Chauhan
Harrow Council for Racial Equality Representative:	Saeed Ahmad
Early Years Development Partnership Representative:	* Helena Tucker
Children's Services Representative:	(Vacancy)
* Denotes Member present † Denotes apologies received	
In attendance:	Councillor Miss Christine Bednell (Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development)

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**60. **Appointment of Chairman:**

RESOLVED: That the election of Chairman be deferred until the meeting of the Forum in September 2008.

61. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**

RESOLVED: That the election of Chairman be deferred until the meeting of the Forum in September 2008.

62. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

63. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

64. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

65. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes from the meeting of 4 February 2008 be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum.

66. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

67. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

68. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

69. **Compliance with the School Admissions Code: Voluntary Aided Admission Arrangements:**

The Forum received the report from the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which set out the requirement for the Forum to review the admission arrangements for voluntary aided schools to ensure they meet the statutory requirements.

The officer recommended that good practice meant that it was necessary to clarify particular items of the admissions criteria, for example, how issues of distance and equidistance were calculated. After a discussion, the Forum agreed that admissions criteria would benefit from a clarification of the differences between a letter from a consultant and a letter from a GP. The Chairman commented that a transparent and clear definition of 'compassionate needs' was required and the Voluntary Aided Schools might benefit from looking at Community Schools' definitions.

A member of the Forum noted that some applicants omitted details of their needs often to the detriment of their application. In response, the Chairman queried whether the inclusion of a question about the applicant's disability needs was an issue for concern. The officer replied that the admissions code allowed such questions if they were used in a positive way.

Discussing the admission arrangements for the Krishna-Avanti Primary School the Chairman reported that Mr Gor, a lead representative of the School, did not recall discussing the number of nominated places with the School Organisation Committee. The Chairman expressed concerns over the Krishna-Avanti Primary School having published their new admissions code and extending the number of nominated places from five to ten without consulting the Forum. A member of the Forum commented that it was the understanding of the School Organisation Committee that a special compensation was made for the Krishna-Avanti Primary School, and that it would only stand for a limited time. Another member expressed their discontent about the exclusion of other Hindu temples within the school's admission code. The Chairman replied that the school's admission code must be transparent and also broad enough to include the wider Hindu community.

A Member of the Forum questioned whether the Krishna-Avanti Primary School might be lacking the necessary experience and had made a mistake with their code. A member replied that the contravention of the admissions code had been brought to the School's attention. Councillor Miss Christine Bednell, (Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development) confirmed that the school had knowledgeable advisors, supported the statement. In response, a member queried the possibility of referring the Krishna-Avanti Primary School to the school's adjudicator if no changes were made to their admissions policy.

The Forum sought legal advice about having a meeting with Mr Gor and the legality of asking the Krishna-Avanti Primary School to change its admissions policy after the determination date. The legal representative confirmed that the Forum would need to apply for an exception to make changes during the six-month determination deadline. The legal representative further confirmed that, as no correspondence between Mr Gor and the Forum had raised the possibility of a referral, a meeting was required to adhere to natural justice.

A member suggested that as the Krishna-Avanti School was being discussed over matters of code contravention, then other Voluntary Aided Schools in Harrow that acted in the same manner must also be addressed. The officer replied that although St George's Roman Catholic Primary School had not submitted its admissions policy, if there were no changes to the policy then a dispensation could be allowed for a year.

RESOLVED: That (1) a timeframe of three weeks would be allowed for Mr Gor to respond to an invitation to a meeting with a select group of members of the Forum to discuss the Krishna-Avanti Primary School's admission arrangements before referral would be considered;

(2) that a letter asking if there had been any amendments to their admissions policy would be sent to St George's Roman Catholic Primary School.

70. **School Re-organisation (Age of Transfer) – Admissions Focus Group:**

The Forum received a report from the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which asked the Forum to agree the process for establishing membership of the Focus Group to review admission arrangements to reflect Harrow's change in the age of transfers from 12+ to 11+.

The Chairman commented that the Focus Group would need to have practical ideas to take to parents for genuine consideration, and that the ideas might be controversial and difficult to work with. Councillor Bednell added that when addressing the best methods of the admissions system it would be impossible to satisfy everybody's needs.

A member of the Forum suggested that it was important to gain support from High School Headteachers to help align the parents with the Forum's suggestions. The Chairman added that the Forum must also consider the possibility of creating working groups to run alongside the focus groups. The officer commented that members of the Stakeholder Reference Group would have to make a large commitment, as the workload would be rather high.

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair commented that the Group must be set up immediately as the paper must be ready to go to Cabinet in June 2008. Councillor Miss Christine Bednell (Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development) added that Cabinet must be aware of what was being consulted on in order to return the recommendations to Cabinet in January 2008.

RESOLVED: That the Forum agreed the process for the establishment of the Focus Group and membership would include Councillor Bill Stephenson, Councillor Miss Christine Bednell, a High School Head, two Primary Heads and a Governor.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 6.02 pm, closed at 7.46 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Vice-Chairman in the Chair